**Draft Assignments for Stuck in Neutral**

**Pre-Reading 1:**

Locked-in Syndrome is “a condition in which a patient is aware and awake but cannot move or communicate verbally due to complete paralysis of nearly all voluntary muscles in the body except for the eyes. Total locked-in syndrome is a version of locked-in syndrome where the eyes are paralyzed as well” (Wikipedia). Try to engage in that during lunch or in class for five minutes—don’t move, don’t talk, don’t gesture. What kinds of things do you hear or notice? How do you think your perception of things and people would change in locked syndrome?

Timeout: Why did I use quotation marks “ “ and parenthesis ( ) ?

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**Pre-Reading 2:**

Write down five to seven questions you would have for Shawn if you interviewed him about his condition (and he could talk or write).

After reading the text, what answers did you find from his impressions?

**Pre-Reading 3:**

To pull the plug or not to pull the plug, that is the question.

Given what you have learned about “Locked-in Syndrome,” what are your thoughts in terms of life support? Do they change if it is you or someone you care about?

**Mid-Book:**

To pull the plug or not to pull the plug, that is the question…a second time.

Have your thoughts changed about life support in a situation similar to Shawn’s? If you have changed your mind, why have you? What in the text caused you to change your mind? Conversely, if you have not changed your mind, what did you read that reaffirmed your position?

**The End:**

To pull the plug or not to pull the plug, that is the question…a third time.

Now that you have finished reading the book, have your thoughts changed about life support in a situation similar to Shawn’s? If you have changed your mind, why have you? What in the text caused you to change your mind? Conversely, if you have not changed your mind, what did you read that reaffirmed (ask me what this means) your position? Lastly, what do you think the author’s position is on this topic? Why do you think that? Use evidence from the text, but you knew that.

**That’s the end? Are you kidding me?**

The ending of the story is a complete cliffhanger. Theorize what will happen in pages 115-120. With your theory in place, find a few passages in the book that support your theory. Essentially, if you think “X” will happen, what in the book points you in that direction?

1. In complete sentences, **summarize** how the story ended (maybe the last two chapters).

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2. Given how the story ended, **theorize** what will realistically happen in the “next” chapter? Think of this like the next ten minutes of the story or the next day.

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**For example:** *Let’s say--let’s just say-- that on a Friday, no one completes the homework. It was a complicated and thought-provoking assignment, one that I was super excited to read. As your class left the room, you see the vein in my forehead ready to explode. You know that on Monday we are planning to play Jeopardy Review.*

4. Theorize from what you know and have witnessed what will happen on Monday:

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5. Find at least three passages from the text (either dialogue or prose) that **supports** your theory. **Copy** them below and **explain** how they support your theory.

Example:

Cindy answers, “I know he wouldn’t; I don’t think it’s about courage, though.”

“No,” Paul says, “maybe not. But Detraux was willing to give up his whole life for it. Dad’s too selfish for that. Besides, if Dad were willing to do that, why would he have waited so long?” (86).

What theory would this passage help to prove?

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How would this passage help to prove the validity (ask me what this word means) of the theory?

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**The End 3:**

Write, either in prose or in screenplay form, pages 115-120. Show your theory in motion by having the characters act out what you think will happen. Big props for dialogue that “sounds” like the characters or in Shawn’s case, his impressions and thoughts mirroring what you read in the novel.

My motives for these last two assignments are to provide balanced opportunities between narrative and expository writings and to have students learn (especially early in the year) to use the text to prove a theory.

For students who enjoy story writing, I find that having a creative direction—in this case sticking to the confines of the given story and the voice--that you have been given for 114 pages is both helpful and necessary to push skill. This particular assignment, given early in year, is in place to reinforce using the text to then create instead assessing creative writing skill.